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ABSTRACT

A study explored the relationships between public relations practitioners' organizational roles and the type of evaluation methods they used on the job. Based on factor analysis of role data obtained from an earlier study, four organizational roles were defined and ranked: communication manager, media relations specialist, communication liaison, and communication technician. Twelve measures of evaluation activities were developed from a conceptual model involving scientific (systematic, quantitative) versus "seat-of-the-pants" (subjective, individualistic) evaluation methodologies. Data were then collected on the organizational roles and evaluation activities of 169 public relations practitioners in San Diego, California. The communication manager, media relations, and communication liaison role scores correlated signficiantly with both scientific and "seat-of-the-pants" evaluation method scores. The communication technician role score, however, correlated with neither the scientific nor the seat-of-the-pants evaluation method scores. The correlation between income and evaluation activities was significant. It was interpreted that the media relations specialists, who were at the middle management rank, used both evaluation methodologies, but tended to confine scientific evaluation methods to dissemination evaluation. (RL)

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Public Relations Division

THE DIFFUSION OF EVALUATION METHODS AMONG PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS

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The use of social science methods to evaluate public relations activities may be hypothesized to follow patterns of diffusion similar to other innovations. Individual practitioners will be motivated by internal and social forces to acquire knowledge of evaluation methods, be persuaded of their relative advantages, adopt the innovations on a trial basis, and decide to continue or discontinue their use.[1]

Professional and research literature related to public relations has long advocated the adoption of social science research methods to evaluate public relations activities. Perhaps the strongest call for adoption of innovative methods was stated by Robinson, who defined the "public relations practitioner of the future" as an "applied social and behavioral scientist."[2] The role of public relations practitioner would become one of applying principles of social science to accomplishment of organizational objectives.

Lewis argues from a different perspective, stating that public relations has "always been an applied social science."[3] What the profession requires is departure from its unsystematic approach and toward integrated relations with the social scientific community. According to Lewis, public relations is not a craft, but an applied science.

Such pronouncements are not necessarily greeted with enthusiasm by practitioners steeped in liberal arts traditions and values. Such changes, according to Pennington, "sounded somewhat digital and dull to many of us in public relations." The diffusion process involves reluctant innovators "being dragged, kicking and screaming, into the mainstream" of evaluation and organizational accountability.[4]

In discussing evaluation in public relations, Cutlip and Center make note of the common retorts of "seat-of-the-pants" practitioners who assert that "public relations is an art" or "we are dealing in intangibles" or "our problems are indistinct."[5] Wright notes, in discussing practitioner responses to the need for measurement, that many thought "they should not be measured because they were artists rather than managers."[6]

Evaluation of public relations activities is especially sensitive, because measurement of "intangibles" may support conclusions of irrelevance of the public relations function. Robert Marker, a practitioner for the Armstrong Cork Co., noted a day of reckoning with management when Marker was asked to justify the coming fiscal PR budget. Marker provided serveral hundred feet of news clippings as evidence of productivity, boasting that he could paper one and one-half walls of the marketing executive's office with clippings left over. The marketing executive leaned forward and asked: "But what's all this worth to us?" Marker's answer to that question was an innovative reorganization of evaluation activities at Armstrong.[7]

In theoretical terms, resistance to the adoption of an innovation can be thought of as a behavioral threshold, as an individual characteristic that resists adoption and tends to maintain the status quo.[8]

Social scientific evaluation of public relations activities lacks compatibility with existing organizational behavior for many practitioners. The complexity of the innovation reduces opportunity for trial adoption of innovative practices. The relative advantage of adoption may also be questioned by many practitioners. These are characteristic factors slowing the process of diffusion.[9]

Public Relations By Objectives

Much of the impetus for change in public relations comes from outside the public relations unit, from the organization and from the environment. Specifically, organizations find themselves under increasing scrutiny and demands from priority publics. As environmental uncertainty increases, demands to evaluate the public relations function are hypothesized to increase.[10] Within the organization, management by objective (MBO) has been widely adopted as an organizational philosophy.[11] As a consequence, managements are tending to view public relations as a proactive rather than as a reactive function.[12] Accountability is pushed downward through the organizational structure, affecting staff activities previously untouched by such responsibility.[13] Public relations has come to be regarded by many organizations as inherently effects oriented.[14] In large corporations, systems of full charge-back, in which profit centers are billed the full cost for public relations services received from the internal PR unit, have been implemented to tie the public relations function inexorably to the "bottom line."[15]

Such change bodes ill for practitioners who narrowly define themselves as artisans of the inverted pyramid. As environmental uncertainty forces senior management to participate in the public relations function, practitioners are increasingly expected to think "time and money, set goals and establish priorities." The "journalist-in-residence" is now being required to plan approaches and execute according to plan, rather than reacting to the "latest squeaking wheel."[16]

The public relations function, in short, increasingly is being viewed as a management function in many organizations. The communication and other activities of the public relations unit are planned, goal-oriented

actions, and are expected to achieve objectives of direct relevance to the organization's survival and growth. Practitioners are expected to make decisions; they are held accountable for outcomes of their activities.

Such change is correctly perceived as threatening to some practitioners hired on the basis of "journalistic skills, experience and contacts."[17] As Marshall notes, "great writers do not necessarily become successful managers."[18]

Evaluation and Public Relations

Methods of evaluation are indicative of a larger problem-solving approach. Robinson argues that public relations as a profession is evolving along paths previously travelled by medicine and engineering. Specifically, public relations practitioners have traditionally solved problems by depending on their "own judgment, realizing full well that . . . reliable knowledge is extremely limited."[19] Professional judgment, perhaps confirmed through consultation with another practitioner, becomes the primary problem-solving mechanism. Robinson describes this individual approach to problem-solving as the "seat-of-the-pants" school. Problem-solving is subjective, intuitive, personal and largely unencumbered or assisted by the social sciences.[20]

As has occurred in medicine and engineering, public relations at the social level of analysis is moving on a continuum toward what Robinson calls the "scientifically-derived knowledge stage." Because public relations goals generally involve change or maintenance of knowledge levels, attitudes and/or behavior of publics, the function is facilitated by advances in the social sciences of communication, psychology, sociology, economics and others. As pure research brings sophistication to our

understanding of human attitudes and behavior, public relations, as an applied professional of social science, becomes increasingly objective, rigorous, empirical and theory based in solving problems.[21]

Evaluation and measurement in public relations have provided fertile soil for theory construction. Contingency models, coorientation models and open- vs. closed-system theory have been invoked to explain the research and evaluation functions in public relations.[22]

Here, a narrower focus is at play. The evaluation function is conceptualized as involving two methodological approaches and three content areas. After Robinson,[23] the two methods of evaluation are dichotomized as either scientific or individualistic. Dichotomizing evaluation methods in this way simplifies Robinson's model of a continuum of approaches to problem-solving, and at the same time distorts its intent. However, measurement issues outweigh these concerns; dichotomizing the continuum provides base for rough exploratory testing.

This study operationalizes two methods of evaluation. After Robinson, the scientific method involves systematic and quantitative data collection and analysis. Information is a shared resource; procedures are subject to replication. Such methods are inherently objective. The individualistic or seat-of-pants method involves highly individualized approaches to evaluation. Such methods are not systematic: hunches, guesses and "gut" reactions all fall under this category. Information is shared only to the degree that other practitioners, looking at the same problem, may apply similar hunches, guesses and "gut" reactions. Subjective evaluation is favored; holistic conclusions are accepted without evidence.

Three content areas are operationalized. Preparation evaluation involves the adequacy of background information during the planning

process, the organization of messages and their presentation. Content, style, format and packaging of public relations communications are included in preparation evaluation.

Dissemination evaluation involves the placement of messages, counts of people receiving the messages and attendance to the information provided. Distribution, media placement, coverage, reach, opportunity for exposure, readership, viewership, listenership and attendance are all part of dissemination evaluation.

Impact evaluation involves assessment of knowledge-level, attitude and behavioral change (or maintenance) among publics. The number of people who learn the content of a message, the number who change attitudes, the number who act in a desired way -- all may be subjects of impact evaluation. Thus, information gain, increased awareness, increased understanding, situation and cross-situational evaluation, behavioral change, adoption, cultural integration and social support are all indicators of impact.

Given two methodological approaches to public relations evaluation and three areas of evaluation content, a matrix can be constructed to incorporate six discrete cells of evaluation activities. Such a public relations evaluation matrix is provided in Figure 1. Within each cell of the matrix is a conceptual description of the type of activity which would typify such evaluation.

From the conceptual descriptions in the public relations evaluation matrix, behavioral measures can be operationalized. That is, specific practitioner activities were identified through a review of the literature and discussions with practitioners which fit the characteristics of each

Public Relations Evaluation Matrix

Content of Evaluation

Method of Evaluation	Preparation	Dissemination	Impact
Individualistic	Communication activities prepared via application of internalized professional standards of quality.	Dissemination of messages evaluated by reactions of mass media professionals.	Impact of PR activities evaluated via subjective, qualitative "sense" of publics' reactions.
Scientific	Communication activities prepared via application of scientifically-derived knowledge of publics.	Dissemination of messages evaluated by quantified measures of media usage of messages.	Impact of PR activities evaluated via objective, quantitative measure of publics' reactions.

Figure 1.

pg. 7

cell. These operational measures of evaluative activities were pretested with a convenience sample of practitioners, revised, and incorporated into a survey instrument. The actual items are displayed in Figure 2, organized by method and by content area. Two items were operationalized for each cell of the matrix.

Reliability coefficients (alpha) were computed for the combined scientific evaluation methods scale and the seat-of-pants evaluation methods scale.[24] Alpha reliability coefficients were .79 and .75 respectively. When these scales were broken down by content areas to yield six scales made up of two items each, the following alpha values were calculated: scientific preparation scale, .64; seat-of-pants preparation scale, .41; scientific dissemination scale, .77; seat-of-pants dissemination scale, .68; scientific impact scale, .54; seat-of-pants impact scale, .57.

The Research Question

What are the relations between the types of organizational roles that public relations practitioners play and the types of evaluation methods they use?

The 12 items displayed in Figure 2 provide behavioral indicators of methodologies and content areas of public relations evaluation activities. Since use of social science research techniques are regarded as innovations in public relations, one would anticipate an adopter typology along classic diffusion lines, consisting of innovators, early adopters, ealy majority, late majority and laggards.[25] Based on the over 1,500 diffusion of innovation studies synthesized by Rogers with Shoemaker, characteristics of innovators distilled from prior research can be used to develop hypotheses about adoption of evaluation techniques.[26]

Innovativeness with regard to evaluation is but one characteristic among many characteristics that distinguish one public relations

Figure 2.

Behavioral Indicators of Programmatic Evaluation Methods Used

Preparation Evaluation

Seat-of-Pants Methods	Scientific Methods
I prepare communications by drawing on my own professional experience and on files I have accumulated on the subject.	I prepare communications by testing preliminary message strategies and formats on focus groups drawn from publics involved.
I check communication strategies during preparation by reviewing them with practitioner colleagues, who apply their own professional standards.	I prepare communications by first reviewing relevant published surveys (Gallup, Harris, Field, etc.) on attitudes of publics involved.

Dissemination Evaluation

Seat-of-Pants Methods	Scientific Methods
I monitor dissemination of messages (news releases, etc.) through my close personal contacts among mass media professionals.	I monitor dissemination of messages (news stories, editorials, letters to editors) through a formal, ongoing content analysis of items in the clip file.
I monitor the dissemination of messages (news releases, etc.) through periodic, formal meetings with senior media professionals.	I monitor the dissemination of messages (news releases, etc.) through a comprehensive clip file and a log of inches placed, reach, and other vital statistics.

Impact Evaluation

Seat-of-Pants Methods	Scientific Methods
I check PR impact by keeping my eyes and ears open to the reactions of my personal and public contacts.	I check PR impact through ongoing counts tabulated of public complaints by phone or letter.
I check PR impact by attending meetings and hearings of groups representative of significant publics.	I check PR impact through interviews with a scientifically selected cross-section of significant publics.

practitioner from another in terms of the organizational roles they play. Using identified role characteristics, the postulates of diffusion research can be used to develop theory-based hypotheses about relationships between evaluation methods and organizational roles.

A final point is crucial. Evaluation in any form, scientific or seat-of-pants, properly is widely regarded as innovative. A practitioner is first innovative by adopting any methodological approach to evaluation. As the more complex and demanding techniques of scientific evaluation are adopted, they serve to supplement rather than replace seat-of-pants evaluation. Such, in any case, is the underlying assumption of the following hypotheses.

Organizational Roles

Measurement of organizational roles is facilitated by studies by Broom[27] and Broom and Smith[28]. Based on experimental tests of organizational role models derived from the literature and consulting activities, Broom developed and pre-tested 24 behavioral indicators of practitioner organizational roles. Broom developed four conceptual, additive scales from the 24 indicators, six measures to each scale. Data were collected from 458 respondents, systematically sampled from the national membership mailing list of the Public Relations Society of America.[29]

Unlike the Broom study, the current study uses empirically-derived scales of organizational roles, rather than a conceptual model. The Broom data set was subjected to factor analysis to derive empirical models of organizational roles. Using factor score coefficients derived from analysis of the Broom data set, weighted factor scales were developed. These organizational role

scales are additive, as are the Broom scales, but variables used as measures of the underlying organizational role were selected through observation of reported behavior rather than theory. Further, each variable is weighted in terms of its relation to the underlying role; variables that are "better" measures of the underlying role are weighted to contribute more to the practitioner's organizational role score.

From the Broom data set, 355 practitioners were included in the factor analysis.[30] Four factors with eigenvalues greater than one were extracted and rotated to final configuration. They are interpreted below.

Factor 1: The Communication Manager Role

As indicated in Table 1, seven behavioral items with high factor loadings serve as measures of the underlying organizational role. Analysis of these items indicates a senior, high-level organizational role. Practitioners with high scores on this role scale typify what Close[31] and Marshall[32] describe as the modern public relations practitioner. The communication manager role is one of solving problems, of proactive and systematic planning. What distinguishes this as a management role is the emphasis on decision-making and accountability. In this role, the practitioner makes decisions, rather than simply implement decisions of others. In the final analysis, the practitioner in this role is held accountable for the success or failure of public relations efforts.

Prior diffusion research would identify this role as favoring the innovation of evaluation. In the role of problem-solver, decision-maker

Table 1.

Factor Loadings of Behavioral Indicators for Communication Manager and Communication Technician Roles

FACTOR 1: Communication Manager Role

Factor Loadings	Item Description
.85	Because of my experience and training, others consider me the organization's expert in solving PR problems.
.80	I take responsibility for the success or failure of my organization's PR programs.
.79	In meetings with management, I point out the need to follow a systematic PR planning process
.79	I observe that others in the organization hold me accountable for the success or failure of PR programs.
.77	I operate as a catalyst in management's decision-making.
.76	I make communication policy decisions.
.73	I keep management informed of public reactions to organizational policies, procedures and/or actions.

FACTOR 2: Communication Technician Role

Factor Loadings	Item Description
.80	I produce brochures, pamphlets and other publications.
.78	I handle the technical aspects of producing PR materials.
.58	I do photography and graphics for PR materials.
.55	I am the person who writes PR materials presenting information on issues important to the organization.
.53	I edit and/or rewrite for grammar and spelling the materials written by others in the organization.

and planner, the practitioner is predicted to perceive evaluation as relatively advantageous and compatible with other characteristics of the role. As the organization's public relations expert, practitioners in this role are expected to be knowledgeable of innovations in public relations and expected to demonstrate leadership in new approaches to old problems. All these factors would make practitioners in this role prone to adopt innovations.

Factor 2: The Communication Technician Role

Table 1 displays five behavioral items that are highly loaded on the communication technician role factor. These items describe an organizational role saturated with the artisan activities of traditional public relations, as identified by Pennington,[33] Wright[34] and Coyle and Stephens.[35]

Practitioners playing the communication technician role are emersed in the mechanics of producing brochures, pamphlets, news releases, publications of all kinds, photographs and graphics. They are performing a relatively technical task, implementing communication decisions and plans made by others. (Communication technician practitioners are unlikely to participate in decision-making or problem-solving activities).

As artisans of the written word and graphics, prior diffusion research would suggest that practitioners with high communication technician role scores are likely to be late adopters of evaluation innovations. Emersion in the craft of message generation is likely to make evaluation seem threatening, especially if such evaluation of the public relations function is new and unexplored. The innovation is

likely to be viewed as relatively disadvantageous. As indicated by Pennington,[36] management's efforts to drive accountability to lower staff functions in the organization may be interpreted as threatening. As primarily non-numeric, such artisans are likely to find evaluation innovations as deficient in compatibility and trailability, while complexity of the innovation will be viewed as high. All these factors would indicate a weak or nonexistent relation between the communication technician role and adoption of evaluation methods.

Factor 3: The Media Relations Role

Table 2 displays three items with high factor loadings on the media relations role factor. The three items loaded on this role factor indicate a sketchy profile of the "journalist-in-residence" approach to public relations.[37] The practitioner with a high score on the media relations role scale is skilled in relations with the mass media and serves as a conduit of information back to the organization about mass media coverage.

Equally informative are items with negative loadings on the media relations role factor. Informing management of polling results (factor loading = -.16) and auditing communication problems with publics (factor loading = -.20) would suggest a pattern of avoiding evaluation activities.

Factor 4: The Communication Liaison Role

Table 2 displays three items with heavy loadings on the communication liaison role factor. Like the media relations role factor, the items provide only a sketchy outline of the underlying organizational role. While the media relations role stresses mass mediated

Table 2.

Factor Loadings of Behavioral Indicators for
Media Relations and Communication Liaison Roles

FACTOR 3: Media Relations Role

Factor Loadings	Item Description
.69	I maintain media contacts and place press releases.
.54	I keep others in the organization informed of what the media report about our organization and important issues.
.35	I keep management involved in every phase of the PR program.

FACTOR 4: Communication Liaison Role

Factor Loadings	Item Description
.45	I represent the organization at events and meetings.
.40	I create opportunities for management to hear the views of various internal and external publics.
.40	When working with managers on PR, I outline alternative approaches for solving problems.

communication, the communication liaison role stresses interpersonal communication activities.

Further, the communication liaison role appears related to the problem-solving process in an advisory capacity. Outlining alternatives to managers (factor loading = .40) couples with other behavioral indicators to suggest that this role facilitates the process of decision-making and problem-solving. However, the practitioner with a high communication liaison role score does not make decisions (factor loading = -.06) and is not held accountable for success or failures (factor loading = -.06).

As such, practitioners with high communication liaison scores differ from communication managers in terms of decision-making responsibility. Whether this is a characteristic imposed on the practitioner by the organizational context or a position actively sought by the practitioner is uncertain. However, as an advisor to the decision-making and problem-solving process, the communication liaison role would appear conducive to adoption of evaluation innovations. Practitioners playing the communication liaison role would likely perceive relative advantage to evaluation innovations, since evaluation and measurement are key to successful problem-solving.[38] Adoption of evaluation innovations would be compatible with the problem-solving characteristics of the role.[39]

Implications of Role Scores

Factor analyzing Broom's data provides methodological rigor to the present study, because development of the measurement scales is conducted on data separate from those upon which hypotheses are tested.

Analysis of the Broom data yielded formulas for calculating each respondent's score on the communication manager, communication technician, media relations and communication liaison scales.

Inherent in R-factor analysis is the assumption that each respondent possesses each organizational role to some degree. This assumption is not unreasonable, as public relations practitioners likely perform in several roles in a typical workday, shifting roles to accomodate organizational expectations and conditions.

Methodology

Public relations practitioners in San Diego, California, were sampled. The eighth largest city in the United States, the San Diego SMSA totals 1.8 million residents. The community is distinguished by its temperate, "sun belt" climate and high cost of living. Major growth industries include aerospace and other high-technology industries. Four professional organizations in San Diego cooperated in this research project: the Public Relations Society of America, the International Association of Business Communicators, the Public Relations Club of San Diego and Women in Communications, Inc. (S.D. Chapter). All four organizations provided mailing lists. Brief "pitches" requesting questionnaire completion were made at membership meetings in February 1981.

Because a single community was surveyed, generalizations from this study are suggestive of further research opportunities. While the decision to survey a single community comprehensively was dictated by larger issues,[40] San Diego does approximate a microcosm of the national practitioner population. A comparison was made of practitioners in the present study and Broom's national survey of public relations practitioners in 1979, using the PRSA

membership list.[41] In the present study, practitioners worked for non-profit organizations in greater numbers than in the national study (46% in San Diego vs. 30% nationally). Regarding income, years of practitioner experience, tenure at present job, media experience, age, education and male domination, the PRSA respondents in the present study closely resemble respondents to the 1979 national PRSA survey. Because other professional associations were included in the present study, the overall respondent characteristics differ slightly from those of the national PRSA survey. The present study's respondents included more women (42% in San Diego vs. 28% nationally in the 1979 PRSA survey), were younger (39 years in San Diego vs. 44 nationally, on the average), earned lower annual salaries ($26,984 in San Diego vs. $34,355 nationally on the average) and had fewer years of practitioner experience (9 years among San Diego respondents vs. 14 years among respondents of the national PRSA study). This underscores the common perception of PRSA as the "elite" professional association for public relations practitioners.

From the four mailing lists, 374 practitioners were identified. Of these, 41 were removed from the sample because they were retired, because they had moved from the area or because they were not public relations practitioners, despite their professional affiliation. Questionnaires were mailed to practitioners in February; a second wave of questionnaires was sent to non-respondents in March. A total of 169 questionnaires were completed and returned, a 50.7% response rate.

In addition to the 24 organizational role items and 12 evaluation methods items, respondents provided information about their education, professional background and experience, gender, income, age and organizational characteristics. The role and evaluation items were measured

using a seven-point, Likert-type scale, ranging from "never" (1) to "always" (7).

Responses were coded in machine-readable form for computer analysis and test of hypotheses. Study hypotheses were:

h_1: Communication manager role scores are significantly correlated with both scientific and seat-of-pants evaluation methods.

h_2: Communication technician role scores are not significantly correlated with either seat-of-pants or scientific evaluation methods.

h_3: Media relations role scores are not significantly correlated with either seat-of-pants or scientific evaluation methods.

h_4: Communication liaison role scores are significantly correlated with both seat-of-pants and scientific evaluation methods.

The following decision rule was established:

> The null hypothesis is confirmed if its probability of accuracy is equal to or greater than one chance in 100.
>
> The null hypothesis is rejected if its probability of accuracy is less than one chance in 100.

Organizational role scores and evaluation method and evaluation content scores were computed for each respondent. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed for each of the four organizational role scores and the two methods of evaluation: scientific and seat-of-pants.

Findings

As indicated in Figure 3, hypotheses h_1, h_2 and h_4 were confirmed by tests of significance of the Pearson product-moment correlations. Hypothesis h_3, on the other hand, was rejected according to the decision rule.

Communication manager role scores are significantly and positively correlated with both seat-of-pants and scientific evaluation activities. Communication technician role scores are not correlated with either

Figure 3.

Correlation of Overall Evaluation Method Scores
With Organizational Role Scores

	Overall Scientific Evaluation Scores	Overall Seat-of-Pants Evaluation Scores
Communication Manager Role Scores	.37 p<.01	.57 p<.01
Communication Technician Role Scores	.14 N.S.	.14 N.S.
Media Relations Role Scores	.23 p<.01	.40 p<.01
Communication Liaison Role Scores	.50 p<.01	.47 p<.01

seat-of-pants or scientific evaluation activities. Communication liaison role scores are significantly and positively correlated with both seat-of-pants and scientific evaluation activities. These findings are consistent with the research hypotheses and with the interpretation of role factors. They are consistent with inferences drawn from prior diffusion research, concerning the relative advantage, compatibility, complexity and trailability of innovations for practitioners playing certain organizational roles.[42]

The significant, positive relationship between media relations role scores and seat-of-pants/scientific evaluation activities is counter to the interpretation of the organizational role factor and contradicts inferences drawn from prior diffusion research.

To understand this unexpected finding, correlations between organizational role scores and each content component evaluation score were examined.

Six evaluation activity scores can be computed, one for each cell of the public relations evaluation matrix. Then, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients can be computed for each organizational role score with each evaluation content-method score. Finally, each correlation coefficient can be determined to be either statistically significant or not significant, according to the decision rule.

Figure 4 displays the results of these computations and statistical tests. As might be expected, the relations between communication manager scores, communication technician scores and communication liaison scores

Figure 4.

Correlation of Organizational Role Scores with the Preparation, Dissemination and Impact Components of the Evaluation Methods Scores

Preparation Evaluation

	Comm. Mgr.	Comm. Tech.	Media Relatn.	Comm. Liaison
Scientific	.38*	.01**	.00**	.49*
Seat-of-Pants	.39*	.17**	.31*	.30*

Dissemination Evaluation

	Comm. Mgr.	Comm. Tech.	Media Relatn.	Comm. Liaison
Scientific	.25*	.17**	.43*	.29*
Seat-of-Pants	.45*	.16**	.36*	.40*

Impact Evaluation

	Comm. Mgr.	Comm. Tech.	Media Relatn.	Comm. Liaison
Scientific	.28*	.14**	.02**	.48*
Seat-of-Pants	.52*	.03**	.27*	.41*

*Pearson product-moment correlation is significant; $p < .01$

**Pearson product-moment correlation is not significant.

with each of the six content-method evaluation scores are consistent with the research hypotheses h_1, h_2 and h_4. That is, the positive relationships between communication manager scores and communication liaison scores are statistically significant for each of the separate content areas of evaluation. Likewise, no relationship exists between communication technician role scores and any of the content-specific evaluation activities.

With regard to the media relations role scores, Figure 4 indicates significant, positive correlations between each of the seat-of-pants content-specific evaluation activities and media relations role scores. Counter to the hypothesis, practitioners with high media relations role scores engage in a number of seat-of-pants evaluation activities in message preparation, message dissemination and message impact.

The relationship between media relations role scores and content-specific measures of scientific evaluation is informative. With regard to evaluation in areas of preparation and impact, the relationship between media relations role scores and evaluation activities is nil. Only in the area of dissemination evaluation does a strong, positive relationship exist between role scores and scientific evaluation activities. These scientific activities include content analysis of media messages and quantification of clip file statistics. Returning to diffusion research, such adoption of innovation in this particular content area would appear consistent, in retrospect, with relative advantage. A practitioner playing a media relations role, who is effective in placing news releases in the mass media, might see quantification of these successes as helpful ammunition in feuds with others who want to know: "What's PR done for me lately?"

To flesh out the profile of the organizational roles played by public relations practitioners, respondents were divided into categories of dominant

roles. A respondent's dominant role was determined by the highest score among the four role scores. Because role scores are normalized, this process artificially divides the sample into four roughly equal-sized groups. This categorization is independent of the absolute frequency of specific activities relevant to each role score. This method does permit development of a rough profile of practitioners for each dominant role.

Such a dominant role profile is displayed in Figure 5. Practitioners in each of the dominant roles do not differ significantly in age, education, years of professional experience and years in their current job.[43] The practitioners do differ significantly in terms of organizational position. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they were ranked as top management, middle management or staff. A higher percentage of communication managers were ranked top management; a higher percentage of communication technicians were ranked staff. These differences were statistically significant (chi square = 14.9; d.f. = 6; $p<.05$).

With regard to mean income, seat-of-pants evaluation scores and scientific evaluation scores, communication technicians show significantly lower averages, when compared to the means of other dominant role types. Further, the communication technician role does not appear to be a transitional role, leading to better career opportunities and higher pay. Communication technicians are paid about $10,000 less each year than communication managers and communication liaison practitioners, despite comparable education and professional experience. A similar problem afflicts the media relations practitioner: income is only slightly better than that of communication technicians.

Profiles of PR Practitioners for Each Dominant Organizational Role Type

	Age	Yrs. Educ. Beyond H.S.	Yrs. PR Experience	Yrs. at Current Job	Percent in Top Mgmt.	Mean Income	Mean Seat-of-Pants Score	Mean Scientific Evaluation Score
Comm. Mgr.	40.4	4.6	11.4	4.3	32.6%	$33,000	4.86	3.25
Comm. Tech.	37.2	4.6	7.7	4.4	22.1%	$21,971*	4.23*	2.73*
Media Relations	39.2	4.8	9.2	5.1	23.3%	$23,360	4.86	2.93
Comm. Liaison	39.8	4.4	9.7	4.7	22.1%	$31,714	4.68	3.68

*Analysis of variance indicates these means are signficantly less than the combined means of other dominant roles ($p<.05$).

Figure 5.

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Conclusions and Implications for Research

Public relations practitioners perform different roles in their organizations. Because demands of organizational roles differ, some organizational roles are more likely to adopt innovative approaches to evaluation of public relations activities.

Communication managers, top ranked and highly paid practitioners, are frequent users of both seat-of-pants, individualistic methods of evaluation and scientific evaluation methods.

Communication liaisons, middle management advisors to senior decision makers, are also highly paid. They are also frequent users of both scientific and seat-of-pants evaluation methods.

Media relations specialists are relatively low-paid practitioners at the middle management and staff rank. They frequently use seat-of-pants methods of evaluation in a number of content areas. Their use of scientific evaluation methods is confined to dissemination evaluation, principally clip file statistics.

Communication technicians are relatively underpaid practitioners confined in disproportionate numbers to the rank of lower staff. Despite comparable education and years of professional experience, these practitioners appear confined to the technical aspects of public relations; they implement other people's decisions. Communication technicians show no systematic pattern of evaluation activities using either seat-of-pants or scientific methods. Indeed combined evaluation activities in both categories are significantly lower than similar activities by other types of practitioners.

Indeed, adoption of innovations in evaluation appears related to success in public relations careers. The Pearson product-moment correlation between

income and evaluation activities is significant (scientific evaluation = .31; seat-of-pants evaluation = .31).

Beyond the scope of this study to date is the causal determinants of organizational roles. Two theoretical perspectives seem relevant. An individual-level cause would attribute organizational role playing to personal characteristics of individual practitioners. Some practitioners tend by attitude and behavioral predisposition to select for themselves an organizational role that seems fitting.

On the other hand, system-level cause would attribute organizational role to situational variables and organizational characteristics. Some organizations, by nature of environmental factors, internal organization and perception of the PR function, simply require the practitioner, regardless of predisposition, to perform within the confines of a particular organizational role.

To test rival hypotheses suggested by individual-level and system-level perspectives, organizational roles need be studied in terms of the subjective perceptions of practitioners. All indicators of roles in the current study were frequencies of overt organizational behavior. What are the subjective attitudes and beliefs about the organization, roles and careers that underlie the overt behavior manifested by practitioners? Focus group studies provide one methodological approach. Q-method and construction of belief system models provide another approach.

Along other lines, practitioner roles need study with regard to the organizational context. The objective clusters of organizational behavior and subjective belief systems of practitioners need to be measured along with behaviors and perceptions of other organizational members. Analysis of relations between practitioner characteristics and characteristics of the surrounding organization seems appropriate.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Everett M. Rogers with Floyd Shoemaker, Communication of Innovation: A Cross-Cultural Approach, second edition (New York: The Free Press, 1971), pp. 98-120.

[2]Edward J. Robinson, Public Relations and Survey Research (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1969), p. ix.

[3]Paul M. Lewis, "Public Relations -- An Applied Social Science," Public Relations Journal, Vol. 30, No. 4 (April 1974), pp. 22-24.

[4]Bruce Pennington, "How Public Relations Fits Into The Puzzle," Public Relations Journal, Vol. 36, No. 3 (March 1980), pp. 18-20.

[5]Scott M. Cutlip and Allen H. Center, Effective Public Relations, fifth edition (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978), p. 218.

[6]Donald K. Wright, "Some Ways to Measure Public Relations," Public Relations Journal, Vol. 36, No. 7 (July 1979), p. 17.

[7]Robert K. Marker, "The Armstrong/PR Data Measurement System," Public Relations Review, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Winter 1977), p. 52.

[8]David M. Dozier, "Behavioral Thresholds and Communication Networks" (Paper presented to the Information Science Division, International Communication Association Convention, April 13, 1978, Chicago, Illinois).

[9]Rogers with Shoemaker, op. cit., p. 102.

[10]Mark P. McElreath, "Public Relations Evaluation Research: Summary Statement," Public Relations Review, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Winter 1977), p. 129.

[11]Karl Albrecht, Successful Management By Objectives (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978), pp. 17-22.

[12]Larry Marshall, "The New Breed of PR Executive," Public Relations Journal, Vol. 36, No. 7 (July 1980), p. 9.

[13]Pennington, op. cit., p. 18.

[14]Glen Broom, "Effective Public Relations: Some Changes Must be Made," San Diego Business Journal, September 8, 1980.

[15]Pennington, op. cit., p. 20.

[16]H. W. Close, "Public Relations as a Management Function," Public relations Journal, Vol. 36, No. 3 (March 1980), p. 14.

[17]Broom, op. cit.

[18]Marshall, op. cit., p. 10.

[19]Robinson, op. cit., p. 12.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Ibid.

[22]An extensive treatment of these theoretical issues is provided in a special issue of Public Relations Review, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Winter 1977).

[23]Robinson, op. cit., pp. 11-13.

[24]The scientific evaluation scale is computed as the mean of the six behavioral indicators of scientific evaluation methods in each of the three content areas. The seat-of-pants evaluation scale is the mean of the six seat-of-pants methods. The six content-specific scales of evaluation are means of the two items within each cell of the public relations evaluation matrix displayed in Figure 2.

[25]Rogers with Shoemaker, op. cit., pp. 183-195.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Glen M. Broom, "A Comparison of Roles Played by Men and Women in Public Relations (Paper presented to the Public Relations Division, Association for Education in Jorunalism Annual Convention, August 12, 1980, Boston, Mass.)

[28]Glen M. Broom and George D. Smith, "Testing the Practitioner's Impact on Clients," Public Relations Review, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Fall 1979), pp. 47-59.

[29]Broom, "A Comparison of Roles," p. 4.

[30]Principal factors (with iterations) were extracted and four factors with eigenvalues greater than one were then rotated to a varimax solution using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Public relations agency and advertising agency practitioners were excluded from the analysis, because the organizational roles of consultants differ from those of internal staff practitioners. A separate factor analysis of agency practitioners yielded six factors. Differences in loadings of items on the various factors indicated that consultant status does alter the nature of organizational roles played.

[31]Close, op. cit., p. 14.

[32]Marshall, op. cit., p. 11.

[33]Pennington, op. cit., p. 18.

[34]Wright, op. cit., p. 17.

[35]Richard J. Coyle and Lowndes F. Stephens, "Why Practitioners Should Master Sampling and Survey Research," Public Relations Journal, Vo. 35, No. 2 (February 1979), p. 14.

[36]Pennington, op. cit., p. 18.

[37]Broom, "Effective Public Relations."

[38]Wright, op. cit., p. 17.

[39]Rogers with Shoemaker, op. cit., p. 102.

[40]The study of practitioners in a single community permitted face-to-face followup interviews with a subset of the original respondents.

[41]Broom, "A Comparison of Roles."

[42]Rogers with Shoemaker, op. cit., p. 102.

[43]One-way analysis of variance was used to test the significance of group mean differences. Because the role typology was only approximately determined, the decision rule was shifted to $p < .05$ for rejection of the null hypothesis. This decision rule was used consistently for all significance tests involving the dominant role typology.